

18 A Sad, Amazing and Dreadful

RELATION

OF A

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Farmer's Wife,

NEAR 79.5.21
1774

WALLINGFORD in *Barkshire*

WHO

Abusing her Husband, for Selling Corn cheap to the POOR, and wishing, *The Devil might Thrash*, the next Day found him Thrashing in the Barn, and was by him thrown on the Mow, remaining there in a piteous manner not to be removed, feeding on the Ears of Corn, and refusing all other Food.

WITH

Her Description of the DEVIL; how he vanished from her, and a great Quantity of Corn he had Thrashed was found black and burned.

MUSEUM
BRITAN
NICVM

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ing, &c.

Many things at first view may seem to
Mankind so strange and amazing, as to
doubt or stagger his Belief, but then when
they seriously deliberate and find things
as strange very often as undeniably verified, they
must admire the wonderful Order of Providence,
in acting and disposing of things below in such a
manner as passeth our understanding, and this
extends either to Mercy, in *favouring*, *feeding* and
protecting Mankind against Dangers, or in Punish-
ment,

ent, in bringing on him Want, Misery and Punishment, by Temptations or other grievous ways, as our Sins and Repinings draw upon us, when God has given us Plenty and we shut up our Bowels of Compassion to the Poor, that are in want, then Blasts and Mildews often fall upon our Corn and Fruits of the Earth, because God, who gives all increase, is dishonoured, by our Covetousness and Ingratitude; so that evil Spirits are sometimes made his Ministers of Vengeance in many kinds to wreck their Fury, as will sadly appear in the following dreadful Relation, which was of late occasioned so much Discourse in divers parts of this Kingdom, being, for the strangeness of it, without parallel: But, not to detain you from the Subject-matter,

It so happen'd of late, That a Rich Farmer whom God had blessed with plentiful Crops of Corn for some Years past, living near *Wallingford*, in the County of *Bucks*; so that having his barns full stored, and hearing the Markets grew scanty, and the Price was much raised, (to the great Grief and Pining of the Poor in these hard Times, when Work it self is scarce, and Money even by that not easily to be come by, for the supplying the craving Necessities of a Family in a Year Year) he opened several *Mows* that had not before been touched and thrashed great quantities, which he sold in the neighbouring *Market*, and

o several *Mealmen*, who came to buy it at the barn floor, thereby getting great Rates, by which means he gained considerable Sums of Money more than he expected: But the one Evening coming from Market, and giving his Wife an Account of his Day's Marketting, and how he had sold, she being always severe in Exacting, which, it seems, for quietness sake he usually did; or, as some say, he being such a Shrew, he durst not do otherwise, he bearing all the Rule, she found by the Money he had not given her a true Account, and so concluded he had underfold, and forced him to a freer confession; which was, That he had opened some Sacks and sold to the Poor, that were very necessitous and flocked thither in great Numbers, some with Tears in their Eyes, at lower Rates. as being moved to compassion at their declaring their Necessities and Inabilities to support themselves and their Children, bidding her be patient and expect God's Blessing to make it up manifold.

Upon this she fell into a passionate Rage, railing at him in a grievous manner, calling him Fool and Sot, and that he ought to consider his own-Interest before that of a parcel of Whores and Rogues, and their Bastards, being a lazy Pack, who minded not so much to work, as to increase the Charge of Parishes, and to eat up what she and others laboured for, &c.

The good Man endeavoured to pacifie her, by putting her in mind, that they had plenty and so felt not the wants of the Poor, and since such a Mercy was extended to them, it was but reason for his sake who had blessed their Endeavours, and given it them, that they should do some good in their Generation.

But this not at all moving her to pity, she grew more outrageous, saying, *None had helped her to the worth of a Penny, but what she had gotten by rising early and sitting up late; and she was beholden to none, as she knew of for a Farthing.*

He upon this pleading the goodness of Providence, to shew her her error, she grew more enraged, calling him *Sot and Fool*, swearing *she would have her will*, and seeing the Rains fell very much and the Harvest like, or at least, as most who are for Self-interest pretend, to be bad, she resolved, that no more should be thrashed, but she would have it kept for *dearer Markets*, which she said, she foresaw would soon grow to a great rate, by reason of the Rains. So that by this we may see what God sends as a *general Good*, is often laid hold on by wretched covetous People, to advantage and enrich themselves, in *grinding the face of the Poor*. The Man then desired, he might thrash some to sell to the Poor People in the Parish where he lived, who could get none at any rate near

at hand. But that was refused him, *command-
him to turn off the Taskers, or she would break their
cks out of the Barn.* This Discourse happening,
Farmer was forced to consent, and so payed
em off, till he could get their Dame in a better
mour, and give them further notice: But the
an being importuned for Corn, he lay at her,
it he might set the Men to work again. Set the
en to work! replied she, angrily, *The Devil shall
ash it first; or I'll sit on the Men, and eat of the
irs my self, before I'll have it thrashed out to be sold
pitiful Rates,* and some other the like Discourse
ppened between them, and so to Bed they went.
at a little before break of Day the Woman was
akened with the thundring Noise of *Flails in the
arn,* which made it seem to her as if there had
een twenty Men at work: The Woman, upon
is, thinking her Husband had set the Men on
ork, waked him and upbraided him with it;
at he protested, *That he had discharged them, and
ew not of any Bodies being there, for the Key of the
arn lay on the Shelf in the Kitchen.*

The Woman, not believing him, rise in a rage,
o turn out the supposed Thrashers, who, finding
he Key as her Husband said, fancied nevertheless
hey might have got in at the Pitching-bay, and
hither she went, but had no sooner opened the
oor but the Barn appeared very light within,
as there were neither *Candle* nor any thing that
could

could reasonably give it to be seen ; and there found a *tall Fellow in black a thrashing*, who I done so much Work, that there lay *huge heap Straw*, and a *little black Boy* threw down *Sheaves* to him as fast as he thrashed ; whereat I *falling in a passion*, began to treat him by the Name of *Rogue and Villain*, charging him to be gone, or would break his Neck : but he seemed not to mind her, his Back being towards her, but plied I Task, till Anger moved her to strike at him an attempt to tear his Hair ; but she, instead of *Hair*, seemed to lay hold on a *Fire*, that scorch'd her so that she cried out, *O Lord, have mercy on me, what is this ?* Whereat the *supposed Man* took her by the Arm, saying, *I go, but you must stay* ; and canting her on the *Mow*, vanished through the *Roof* in a *Cloud of Smoke*, taking some part of with him, as also his *Imp* that attended him.

And now *Day-light* coming pretty clear, the *Noise of the Flails* ceased, and the *Wife* not returning he went to see why she stayed, and seeing her on the *Mow*, called to her ; but she could not speak yet in her looks shewed much *horror and affrightment*, when going up to her, he found her fast and immoveable, all his strength not being able to stir her : And looking on this as some *Judgment*, he called some *Neighbours*, who prayed for her ; then her Speech came to her again, and she confessed, *I was a Judgment upon her, by the conviction of her mind*
selling

telling what she had seen, and how she came on the
 Mom, showing the Hole in the Roof, and pointing to
 the Corn; when they went to look on it, being a
 great quantity, more than two Men could thrash in
 a Day, they found it all black, parched, and as it
 were burned, being good for nothing, but to feed
 Hogs; and it is affirmed, That the Woman soon
 after telling the Story, falling into Ravings, declar-
 ed, It was revealed, or whispered in her Ear, That
 she was under the Just Hand of God, whom she had
 offended, and could not be renounced thence, till a cer-
 tain time. And so she continued eating the Ears of
 the Corn, refusing all other Food. whilst Prayers
 were made for her, That God would be merciful to
 her, and remove this Heavy Judgment from her.

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